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Middle East Policy Council

Fortieth in the Capitol Hill Conference Series on U.S. Middle East Policy

Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars

Speakers:

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CHAS W. FREEMAN, JR.: It is about 9:30 Arab standard time - it's my pleasure to welcome everyone here. I'm Chas Freeman. I have the honor to be president of the Middle East Policy Council. And we will proceed - I'll make a few remarks and then we'll proceed directly to discussion of "Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars."



I will proceed from the least interesting to the most interesting. The least interesting for many of you, but I hope not all, is a brief report on the condition of the Middle East Policy Council. In brief, donations are now hard to get for reasons which are easy to understand, namely, the conclusion by many Arabs who have been donors in the past that Americans are uneducable and that continuing to spend money on educating Americans about Arab issues and Islam is a waste of money; the concern about investigation of wire transfers and checks and donations generally; the shrinkage of the American business community in the Arab world in general, in the Gulf in particular, where in Saudi Arabia it's down to about a third of what it is was; and the concomitant, I

should say -- lack of interest for image reasons by American corporations in being associated with Middle-Eastern causes, plus the sudden discovery by governments in the region of public relations. (As you all know, when god passed out public relations genes, he somehow overlooked the Middle East.) But people there have finally discovered public relations and are consequently focused on the immediate and urgent issues rather than long-term education.

For all of these reasons, the sort of existence we've had -- living from month to month from small donations of one sort or another -- is no longer viable and we are engaged in a drive to get an endowment so that we can continue our work, which I will explain in a minute.

I'm happy to report that due to the generosity of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, we have markedly improved our position in that regard. We used to have exactly enough money to be able to drop dead. (Chuckles.) Now we have enough money to shut down in an orderly fashion. We do not yet have enough money to sustain our programs but I am encouraged by quite a number of potential donors with whom I have been in contact to believe that we may indeed achieve long-term viability.

What does the Middle East Policy Council do? We do three things. We raise politically incorrect questions for public discussion. We tend to be well ahead of the curve on raising issues. We publish views that don't find a voice elsewhere in "Middle East Policy," the most often-cited journal in the field. An edited transcript of this session will appear as the lead item in the next issue of *Middle East Policy*.

And finally, invisible in Washington, but perhaps most significantly, we train high school teachers throughout the country - we have trained about 18,000 - how to teach about Arab civilization and Islam. We therefore confuse high school kids, actually about 1.4 million kids every year, with a fact or two, which they otherwise would not encounter in the course of the splendid American public school educational system.

So that is what we do; we think it's worth doing, that it's a service to the country, and that it should continue. We will see whether it does or does not.

Today's session was sparked by a comment by a very senior U.S. military officer, to the effect that the strategy of the insurgency in Iraq did not make sense to him. He couldn't figure out what this insurgent movement was attempting to accomplish. And in the spirit of Sunzi's aphorism - (in Chinese) - know yourself, know your enemy and you will win a hundred victories in a hundred battles, it occurred to us that it might be worthwhile examining what is actually happening in Iraq to determine whether there is an insurgency. Is there anyone with whom we could, in fact, negotiate a comprehensive settlement of some sort of the violence? Is there anyone who could call it off? We will be discussing that issue in various ways this morning.

I would give you my own impression at the outset, which is that there are at least three insurgencies going on. One is a secular nationalist resistance to the Anglo-American occupation led by ex-Ba'athist elements of the secular movement. The second, that there is a religious resistance, or religiously inspired resistance to the occupation, which draws on people who feel their honor has been offended in some manner by the occupation forces and who seek revenge. And, third, there are international jihadis who are attempting to exploit both of the foregoing and adding their own agenda to the mix.

But this doesn't, to my mind, explain the whole picture. We are of course trying to build an army that would provide a new Iraqi state with a monopoly of force in a new Iraq. And it is dealing not only with these insurgencies, but increasingly with what appears to be a low-intensity civil war or civil wars between different Iraqi factions who have become part of the general anarchy and insurgency in Iraq.

There are Sunnis resisting the prospect of Shi'a majority rule and resisting the legitimization of their own disempowerment by attacking the Iraqi armed forces or attacking Shi'as, whether military militias or civilians. There are Shi'as revenging themselves on Sunnis. (I am speaking of Arabs here.) There are Kurds seizing Arab property and expanding Kurdish control of parts of Iraq using our presence as a screen for their dream of an autonomous or independent Kurdish state on Iraqi territory. There is an Iraqi army hired by us, trained by us, which is trying to deal with all of the above.

Perhaps the situation is neither as complex nor as dire as the description I have just offered. In any event, it is not a simple situation and I have no pretension to be an expert on either Iraq or guerilla warfare. And that is why we have what I think is an extraordinary panel assembled to address some key questions.

Has the mix of factors and forces that constitute the so-called insurgency in Iraq been changing or is it

more or less as it was from the outset? Is this a dynamic or a static situation? If it is changing, how is it changing, in what direction? If there are indeed civil wars, incipient or low-intensity going on, does the famous advice of whomever it was who articulated the three rules for intervention in civil war apply? Those three rules of course, are, one, don't; two, if you do, pick the side that will win; and, three, help that side win fast and win big. Is there anyone in Iraq who can win? And is there anyone who could sustain such a victory? Does this advice apply?

And, third, what are the implications for American policy? What is the policy? It's not entirely clear. Some people are arguing that we are militarily getting better and better at implementing a policy that may be counterproductive. So is the policy, whatever it is, likely to work, and if not, what are the alternatives?

These are some of the issues we want to get at. We have until about noon to do it. These sessions are always more or less the same. Each speaker will get 10 to 12 minutes. As the 12-minute mark approaches, I will seize a weapon and move menacingly in their direction and force them to - I hope - although you're a pretty tough guy - to stand down.

MR. FREEMAN: So, anyway, 10 to 12 minutes per panelist. We'll then open it up for general discussion. That is generally the most interesting part of these sessions. And I encourage all of you to come to the mike, identify yourselves, put a question to us that is intelligible and succinct, or a comment that meets those criteria will do just as well. Speakers will proceed in the order shown on the program, and if you turn the program over, you will see a brief, more or less correct biography of all four. There is a mistake or two, but we will just pass by that.

We will start with Ivan Eland, who has been a participant in the past, formerly with the Cato Institute, now senior fellow and director of the Center on Peace and Liberty at the Independent Institute, newly established here in Washington, the author of a very widely praised book recently called "The Empire Has No Clothes," and many other studies of U.S. security issues in the past.

Colonel Robert Newman is an active duty soldier who currently serves as the assistant chief of staff for civil military operations for III Corps, Fort Hood. And he of course is here in his individual capacity. He is not representing either the U.S. Army or the U.S. government. But he is a very noted expert on the Shi'a militias. Ivan will talk about the Kurds; Bob will talk about the Shi'as.

Jeff White from the Washington Institute on Near East Policy has completed a 34-year career with the Defense Intelligence Agency and is an expert on Sunni affairs in Iraq. And he and the aforementioned Colonel Pat Lang, who is also an expert on Sunnis I think - well, on everything really, will bring up the end of the discussion.

So I would like to ask you all to join me in welcoming the panel. (Applause.) and Ivan, you're on.

MR. ELAND: Thank you, Chas. I appreciate the opportunity to give my views on this very important subject. I noticed in the program we're going from talking about the groups that are most friendly to the U.S. to the least friendly. So I guess I'll start off by stating that even though the Kurds are friendly to us now, that may not necessarily hold.

I will give a quick introduction about some of the Kurdish militias and then I'll get into the meat of my presentation. There have always been two Kurdish militias or peshmerga, meaning those who face death. They are controlled by the parties largely and the security forces have been heavily influenced by these militias. The first one is Mustafa Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party. Now, the numbers have been disputed. The number I have found most is about 35,000 fighters - rules Western Kurdistan - Barzani has been elected to the presidency of Kurdistan.



The other one is Jalal Talabani Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, and the number that I have seen most there - of course these are - any time you see estimates like this, you have to question who is giving it and that sort of thing. But he has 25,000 fighters. His party rules Eastern Kurdistan. He has been elected to the presidency of Iraq. Now, together with the regulars, the Kurdish militias probably have about 100,000 fighters, but of course, again, that figure can be contested.

The Kurdish militias are first loyal to their party, then to Kurdistan, and only thirdly, and lukewarmly, loyal to Iraq as a whole. Since the Gulf War in 1991, the coalition no-fly zonings have made Kurdistan essentially independent from Iraq. There is a separate flag and a police force budget, and all of this

has been guaranteed by the recent Iraqi election. Barzani has been quoted as saying, quote, "What we really need to work on in the parliament of Kuridstan is that the region of Kurdistan should have its own special constitution and laws. There is absolutely no need to have that link that whatever is done in Baghdad should be done here too."

So what they really want - the Kurds want nominal control of the militia from Baghdad - real control of course in their region. And the militias have the trappings of a separate military officers college, training camps, and armor and artillery units operating independently from Iraqi Security Forces. Kurdistan is essentially a semi state that has a kind of a bunker mentality because of course there is a lot less violence in most of it than in the rest of Iraq, but they are very wary about that violence coming to their doorstep.

The Kurds are playing a game or have accepted a unified Iraq in rhetoric, but I think they are hitching their wagon to the U.S. occupation in order to get an independent Kurdistan eventually. I think they have a lot of big demands as Chas and I were talking before the program. They have a lot of demands which may not be able to be fulfilled under the current negotiations.

Barzani has also been quoted as saying, quote, "All the Kurdish parties have agreed that for now we are living with a federal regime in a democratic Iraq." Notice the words, "for now" - I think are the operative words there. I think if the Kurdish interests diverge from the U.S., they will not be loyal allies. The Kurds are famous for shifting their loyalties over the years when their insurgents have changed, and they even fought - the two militias fought a civil war in the mid-'90s that killed 3,000 Kurds.

One Kurd militia also allied with the Iraqis against the other Kurdish militias at one point. And Chemical Ali, the Iraqi general who gassed the Kurds, was warmly welcomed in - by the KDP, even after he had gassed the Kurds, as an indication that alliances are changeable. Now, the two Kurdish militias are cooperating more closely and they are worried about the Turks. They want to broaden to Germany and to Syria and Iran and Turkey to try to recruit people to come to Kurdistan - that is Kurds to come to Kurdistan to potentially fend off any Turkish challenge.

And of course both militias helped the Turks against the Turkish Kurds, the PKK, across the border in Turkey. So you can see that these alliances are changeable, and I think that, you know, we have to realize that the Kurds are after their own agenda, and like many of the other groups in Iraq, they are playing the U.S. for their own reasons.

Before the Iraqi elections, the Kurds seemed to be willing to get rid of their militias but that has changed now. They did well in the election. And I don't think they - they no longer trust the United States to bring peace and stability to Iraq and ensure their interest vis-à-vis the other groups. And I think the United States has no choice but to allow them to keep their arms because we are using them as a fighting force to fight against the Sunnis. And so we're also using them to provide intelligence which we sorely lack there.

So I think there is no choice but to leave the Kurds with their arms, just like some of the Shi'a have been left with their arms. And of course we have the Sunni insurgency. So we have all of these groups running around with weapons and of course that will be a problem in the future. I think it's going to be very hard to disarm all of these groups.

Now, the U.S. has helped in the fighting of Fallujah and Tall'Afar and also in Mosul - which has been divided into a Kurdish and an Arab West. And the coalition has asked the Kurds to control the Western half of the city. And of course, this is going to increase tensions between the Kurds and Sunni and there is already, as Chas has mentioned, a low-level civil war there going on.

So, now, the peshmerga have raised the ire of the Sunni community by helping Americans against the Sunnis. And I think the situations in Kirkuk and in Mosul are both explosive with the daily ambushes, assassinations and car bombings. In Kirkuk, the local battlefield centers on a critical oil pipeline which is often blown up. Now, the Shi'ites might try to block the autonomy of the Kurdish militias from the Iraqi Security Forces, but they too have militias they want to keep or at least have them incorporated into Iraq security forces as whole units. For example, the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution has the Badr organization. And so the Shi'a might decide that they don't want to press the Kurds to do it because they might have to do it as well.

Now, of course the official U.S. policy is that all of these groups should not have their own militia outside of state sanctioned, but the U.S. government tried unsuccessfully to disarm the militias before turning power over the Iraqis last summer. And so now the U.S. military is now saying that the Iraq

government must figure out what to do with these militias. Well, if the United States government can't disarm them, the Iraqi government certainly isn't going to be able to disarm them either. Larry Diamond, the former advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority, sees a drift toward warlordism and potentially Lebanese-style civil wars.

Now, Kurdish militia are some of the most potent in Iraq. They seized thousands of armored vehicles and many weapons from Iraqi forces after the second Gulf War. They have been trained by the U.S., South Africans, and Israelis. And of course, according to investigative reporter, Seymour Hersh, Israel concluded that the U.S. had already lost the battle against the Sunni insurgency as early as mid-2003 and hooked their wagon to the Kurd forces to defend Kurdistan. And the less well-equipped peshmerga, actually fought well against Saddam's army, particularly in rural areas and in the retaking of a major city.

Now, Kirkuk is a very interesting case and the U.S. government and the new Iraqi - or excuse me, the U.S. occupation and the new Iraqi government are supposed to be ruling it. In effect, the Kurdish militias are ruling this important oil city and the Kurds want this city because it will allow them to get the oil and provide revenue for an independent Kurdish state. So possession is nine-tenths of the law. Saddam had cleansed the Kurds from Kirkuk and replaced them with Sunni Arabs, and of course, the Kurds are, as Chas mentioned, seizing Arab property and territory and using it under the U.S. screen.

Now, there have been lethal clashes between the peshmerga and the Turkomon and Arab residents of Kirkuk in the northern Sunni triangle for some time. The peshmerga checkpoints are designed to keep Arabs out. Now, these Kurdish military have been in the paper two days ago of kidnapping Turks and Sunnis. And they have used rough tactics in the past. Of course this is nothing new in Iraq but I think we need to realize that these militias are not necessarily any more humanitarian than other ones in Iraq. They are our allies and so we kind of make excuses for them sometimes.

There was a proposal at the Pentagon to have them do this type of snatch operations but I don't know if it went anywhere. So the U.S. military is saying that they are trying to stop it. But I think this was a widespread initiative by the Kurdish political parties to exercise authority in Kirkuk in an increasingly provocative matter. And I am quoting a State Department cable that was released recently. So I think I'll just stop there and take your questions later. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you very much. An admirable introduction to the entire subject by reminding of the existence - longstanding existence of armed political movements and militias in Iraq. I don't believe, although Colonel Newman's experience with Iraqi Shi'a goes back at least to the first Gulf War, you were in the special forces in Southern Iraq where the Shi'a rebellion occurred, I don't believe that there was that depth of history to Shi'a militias. I am not inviting you to give us a history of Shi'a militias, but clearly with 60 percent of the Iraqi population or so being Arab Shi'a, what happens among Shi'a and between Shi'a and others is absolutely vital. And we look forward to hearing what you have to tell us about it.

COLONEL ROBERT NEWMAN: Good morning. Thank you for letting me be here today. I promise to be candid but I ask you to understand that I will not discuss any classified information or respond to questions on policy issues that I know have already been answered by chain of command.



My perspective has always been that of the guy in the field, whether in an embassy or a unit. I have worked in a series of headquarters recently in Iraq, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia mainly as a liaison officer dealing with their militaries. That experience has given me abiding respect for academics, diplomats, and intelligence officers who are real subject matter experts on Iraq and the Middle East.

As a soldier who returned from Iraq three months ago and who will probably return next year, I have to be both optimistic and profoundly realistic about the challenges that the U. S., its allies, and the Iraqis face. My perspective of Iraq and Iraqis is a very personal one and it is heavily influenced by the fact that my friends, both Americans and Iraqis are getting killed there on a daily basis.

On this topic, "Occupied Iraq: One Country, Many Wars," it probably should be one country, many people's many wars. I am addressing the Iraqi Shi'a militia groups as I feel that they and the political organizations that they are tied to are key to the reconstruction of Iraq, whose major goal now is the process of transition to majority rule of the Iraqi Shi'a coming to power.

Twenty years ago, Professor Phebe Marr (sp) wrote that if one can speak of an Iraqi state, it is not yet possible to speak of an Iraqi nation. Iraq's present borders incorporated averse medley of peoples who have not yet been welded into a single political community with a common sense of identity. The process of integration and assimilation has gone on steadily since the inception of the mandate, but it is by no means complete.

Ivan has just talked about the Kurdish component to that and I agree with everything he said mainly. The current elected Iraqi transitional government dominated by Shi'a and Kurdish parties, but especially by Shi'a of the United Iraqi Alliance is a significant step forward in that process. The bottom line of my remarks will be that in the near future, Iraq's political leadership and the U.S. and its allies will make a series of difficult decisions with regard to the DDR, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of these militias. And those decisions will decide whether the political process that has been ongoing will continue to move forward or whether it will be delayed, which has big policy consequences for the United States.

As Ambassador Freeman has mentioned, I have had some personal close contacts with the Iraqi Shi'a beginning in 1991. At that time, most of the other panel members all had a much bigger world view. At that time I was particularly knowledgeable, or so I thought, about Iraq and Iraqi Shi'a as I had just finished two years of graduate study at an outstanding Ivy League university. I first got to watch the March '91 Shi'a intifada from the perspective of Safwan and the Abdali border crossing into Kuwait.

At that time I was able to talk to a lot of Iraqi Shi'a. At that time, for the record, none of them were claiming that their uprising was due to President Bush's call for an uprising. And then later that year, while assigned to Embassy Riyadh when I went up to the Iraqi refuge camp at Rafah in Northern Saudi Arabia as a translator, note taker, the ambassador was quite clear that I shouldn't exceed that role. I was amazed to find the Iraqis organized into a sort of Congress. This was a group that I was expecting to be mainly Iraqi Shi'a from the Southern three provinces. But they were from all 18 provinces.

And every group, class and interest described by Professor Hanna Batatu - the "big blue death" is the classic for any one in Middle East studies who is studying Iraq to read. You need a small red wagon to carry it around. But everything that he had described there was present in the tents that we listened to - hours and hours of issues. At that time all of those Iraqis said that their uprising was a direct response to President Bush's call. And since that time, I got to spend most of that period in the Arab world meeting Iraqi expatriates all the time and dealing with the issues of Iraq from the countries that border it.

I was also present at the first Iraqi people's meeting on April 15, 2003 at Ur, the birthplace of civilization near Nasiriyah. That meeting was once again very similar to what I had read of previous Iraqi opposition conferences where there seemed as much, if not more, disagreement among Iraqis and especially among Iraqi Shi'a on the nature of their future state as there has been in any period since the end of the Ottoman Empire.

There are primarily two Iraqi Shi'a militia groups, even though officially they all ended last summer as Ivan explained. He mentioned securities Badr organization previously known as the Badr Corps or Badr brigades or Badr force. And then there is Muqtada Sadr's Jaysh al-Mahdi (sp). I will show my prop before Jeff makes his high-speed presentation and puts me to shame.

But if you come by and look it and, you know, for those of you who read Arabic, it has got some very simple but very powerful messages on it. And then there is a lot of other guys with guns, okay. They are linked to the Islamic Dawa (ph) party, to Dr. Chalabi, to Abdul Karim Mahoud al-Dowe (ph), who is, a.k.a. the Hattem, "The Lord of the Marshes." And then a host of others at the local level including the Shi'a and Turkoman and tribal militia up in the Tolafer (ph) area who have been clashing with the Kurds as well as with the Sunni Salafi Jihadis.

I will not discuss the Iranian opposition militia, the MEK, Mujahedin-e-Khalq, but they are also a complicated part of this process of dealing with the Shi'a militia. The issue of DDR, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of party and tribal militias, as Ivan says, has been recognized from the beginning is an important one. The CFLIC (ph), the military headquarters in Iraq, ORHA (ph), the predecessor to the CPA, General Garner's, all issued proclamations and the CPA's transitional



[click to see larger image](#)

administrative law, the TAL, in article 27 specifically prohibited militias not under the command structure of the Iraqi government. And the reaction at that time by those militia groups is they all officially went away. The recent contradictory announcements by senior Iraqi government officials, multiple ones on this subject in the last several weeks, are particularly perplexing and frustrating.

The Badr Corps, Fahl (ph) Badr, as the Iraqis continue to call it, officially became the Badr Organization and a political vice, a militia group following the issuance of the TAL. Probably as a response to the KDP, PUK position that the peshmerga was not a militia, but the official security forces of the KRG or Kurdish regional government. And it was notionally under the control of the central government even though Ivan pointed out there has been some discrepancy in those comments by senior Kurdish officials.

The Badr Corps members have been playing significant political and security roles in all of the province of Southern Iraq. There are senior Badr Corps members throughout the Iraqi government under both the IGC and IIG, the predecessors to the current ITG, Iraqi Transitional Government. And they have assumed significantly more responsibility with the election of the ITG. There are probably significant numbers of Badr Corps members in the Iraqi Security Forces, but there is a tendency not to admit this membership to coalition forces.

The Badr Corps officers in the ISF that I have worked with were previously field grade officers in the Iraqi Army. They claimed to be Iraqi patriots and not to be under Iranian influence. That said, they seemed to me to be concerned only about former regime elements, Ba'athis and Sunni jihadis, and not about the Sudris (ph) or about Iranian influence. The issue of Iranian ties is central to all of the Iraqi Shi'a militia, but especially to the Badr Corps, who are originally formed around the cadre of former Iraqi Army Shi'a EPWs from the Iran-Iraq war. They were reportedly trained by the past Iran IRC on an IRGC base and had IRGC advisors.

In the presence of RGFC revolutionary guard and MOIS -- intel guys, agents from Iran - as well as Iranian weapons continues to be an issue. The Jaysh al-Mahdi, or Muqtada Sadr's militia were reportedly formed in 2003 and clashed with coalition forces in April and August 2004 in a series of bloody clashes and multiple locations, but especially in Najaf and Sadr City. Jeff White has written a series of excellent articles describing, identifying those clashes as well as their impact.

By and large, they tactically defeated by the coalition forces in all of those engagements and forced to turn weapons and dismantle an incredible web of IEDs and their sanctuary of Sadr City. Muqtada Sadr has become a significant political force in Iraqi politics and may have also suffered some operational strategic defeat as his Sadrs movement was forced to morph. Muhammad al-Ya'qubi formed the Fadilah Party. And this has been described by a Professor Juan Cole University of Michigan and Fah Abdul Shabar (ph) London University.

I think we need to pay a lot more attention to the origins of the Sadrs movement in order to understand how that organization and its related organizations is morphing and playing an increasing political role. I have never personally observed any militia forces clearly identified with the Islamic Dawa party, just personal security forces, but they were identified with assassination attempts in Iraq and Kuwait in the '80s. Dr. Chalabi was reportedly accompanied by a 742-man militia when he flew into Tallil and Nasiriyah from Kurdistan in late March 2003. However, that force was officially disbanded by an order from CFLIC and ORHA in late-April or early-May 2003.

Abu Hattem or Abudl Karim Mahoud al-Dowe is one of the Shi'a leaders who incites strong reactions from many Iraqis. Whether he is a popular hero, the Lord of the Marshes, or a murderous criminal depends on your perspective. His role since April 2003 as well as his brother, the former government of Maysan Province and his Samara militia also incite debate. He is currently supposedly promoting a Shi'a federalist alternative involved Shi'a provinces under the name of Sumer (ph), which seems to be much at odds with what many would perceive is Iraqi Shi'a interests, as well as the recent proclamations concerning the Badr organization.

The process of transition to Iraqi or to Shi'a majority rule has resulted in insurgency over the past two years, which has made it very difficult for the U.S. and its coalition to establish a secure environment for the reconstruction of Iraq. Coalition forces are currently working hard with the ministries of defense and interior to equip and train Iraqi Security Forces in order to facilitate resolution of the more complex political problems. There are a multitude of challenges associated with the establishment of those forces, but progress will largely depend on the decisions made by the current Iraqi political leadership, especially the Shi'a leadership.

If both Shi'a and Kurdish leaders continue to feel the need to maintain large armed militias, coalitions forces will be again faced, just like we were last year, with major choices in terms of confrontation or accommodation. The U.S. and its allies must continue to work hard to engage Iraq's neighbors to play more positive roles in this process to achieve regional stability. In particular, in order to influence the Shi'ia parties and their militia the US and particularly and its allies may wish to increase their engagement with Iran.

A long-term approach, a multilateral approach to disarmament of the Iraqi Shi'a militias, as well as the other militia forces in Iraq, is going to be necessary if we are ever going to develop a truly trained and competent Iraqi Security Force. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you very much. I think what you have just heard, which is an extraordinary presentation, demonstrating the level of complexity on the ground in Iraq that is not made visible to most people in this country, illustrates something that I observed in the course of my 30 years in government, which is that intelligence failures are virtually invariably failures of the intellect, not failures of people in the U.S. government to have the necessary information to make correct decisions. And it's clear that we do have experts in the U.S. Army who understand a lot about different elements of Iraq. I'm proud to have spent a short time serving with Colonel Newman in Saudi Arabia.

I wonder, as we turn now to Jeff White and begin to talk about the Sunni insurgents, whether the two previous presentations shouldn't have reminded us of this alleged report of two Sunni groups coming forward with a proposed negotiation with the coalition forces addressing two agendas, one, a date certain for American withdrawal, and second, assurances against excessive Iranian influence in the future Iraq. I wonder what is wrong with this agenda and why it has not been picked up. And perhaps Jeff can, in the course of his presentation, explain why that shouldn't be taken seriously. But I throw it out as an issue to be talked about when we get to a discussion period.

JEFFERY WHITE: Okay, thank you, Ambassador Freeman. I'm glad to be here. It's a pretty interesting panel, interesting topics and so on. Surely, the Sunni-Arab insurgency in Iraq is at least as complicated as Ambassador Freeman mentioned in his remarks, maybe even more complicated. But what I wanted to talk about though is why it's so hard to deal with. Why are we finding the insurgency in Iraq such a confoundedly difficult military and political problem?

Before I did that, though, I wanted to say there some things that are going right in Iraq for sure. I don't want to be accused of just looking at the empty half of the glass so I will look at the full half of the glass from the beginning. From the start, we have got a lot of things going for us. We have the will, it seems, at least for now, to persevere in Iraq, to accomplish our objectives there. That is I think in question or increasingly in question now maybe with the talk of U.S. withdrawal, date certain, and so on. Reconstruction is making slow progress, difficult progress, but yet it is going forward. It is not a win yet, but it is I think positive overall in the country.



And we have a lot of resources in Iraq. We have 138,000 troops, 150,000 coalition troops. That is a lot of troops. My view is it's not enough troops, but there are a lot of troops there. We have a lot of money we're pouring in there. We have a lot of skilled people and so on. The Iraqis now have an elected government. The political transformation process is proceeding if haltingly slowly, it is proceeding; they always make the gates. They move forward.

The ISF, the Iraqi Security Forces, military and police have massively expanded: 169,000 more or less at the last count. The key issue there is how many of them are any good? How many of them are capable of operating independently and so on. But they are expanding and the U.S. Army, the U.S. military knows how to train people. So over time - I think it's years, not months - but over time, those forces will come on line.

Just as important as those sort of factual things, there are number of processes and dynamics in Iraq that are also going well from our standpoint. We did create the elections - not we - the elections created a - hold on a second - I'm going to bring this up here - the elections created pressure on the Sunnis to make decisions about their future political life.

And this slide here ([Slide 1](#)) is just an attempt to capture what the spectrum of Sunni-Arab political choice is, ranging from absolute resistance and opposition on the left to collaboration. And the secretary of defense stated the other day that what we want to do basically is push people toward the

right end of the spectrum. That is our objective and I think the elections did accomplish that.

We have also made intelligence gains I think in Iraq. We're getting better information on the Sunni-Arab insurgency. There has been a lot of attrition to the Zarqawi network, even in the last few days. And we have created a number of stresses. A number of stresses have developed on the insurgents, which are making their life more difficult - calls for amnesty, there is some tribal fighting out in the West, indications that the insurgents are or at least some of the elements of the insurgency are sensitive to the mass-casualty producing incidents. These are all things we're seeing and putting stress on them.

Against that, though, we have to set what I call the elements of intractability, you know, what is the bad side of the situation. And I can count at least 11 of these. You can probably add some, you might disagree with some, but there is - (chuckles) - a number of things that make it difficult there, make it hard for us to achieve our objectives.

At the first you have to start with grievance. The Sunni community sees itself as seriously aggrieved for a number of reasons. They are the big losers of the war. They lost power, they lost position, they lost influence, and no jobs program or no provision of electricity can really compensate for that. So there is a definite and serious loss there. But they were never - but they are not the defeated in a sense. They didn't have a military catastrophe visited upon them like Japan and Germany did at the end of World War II to fundamentally change their outlook about the political situation in Iraq. They didn't see that. The war really passed by I think most of the Sunnis and the Sunni Arabs in an important way.

A second area of grievance is the coalition and Iraqi Security Force actions that - we have heard all of the stories of things that happen that antagonize the Sunnis. There is kind of a sense of an emerging war against the Sunnis. That is, the complex of actions produced by the government, by the security forces, by coalition action all focus of course on the Sunni population and there is this notion that it is coming down to that, that it isn't just war against resistance or the insurgents. It is a war against the Sunnis themselves.

A second major factor I think in the intractability is the early onset of the insurgency, and this doesn't get a lot of attention. But the insurgency emerges very quickly. You can see by the beginning or by the end of April it's already started, by November of 2003, it's well underway and a serious thing. And we were caught on our back foot on that issue and we never caught up. The insurgency is also pervasive now. It exists in a wide geographic area. And this is just an example of data we have for May, which shows the number of provinces or the provinces in Iraq where insurgent activity is in fact taking place ([Slide 2](#)).

There are now what look like zones of resistance - the area from Tall'Afar to Mosul, the Euphrates Valley down from the Hizbaya (ph) the Syrian border down to Fallujah, Northern Babil Province. These are not just one little town here or there. These are beginning to look at least like actual zones of resistance.

And the insurgency, resistance, whatever you call it also pervades the Sunnis in a psychological sense. Notions of resistances, notions of jihad, that is in the Sunni-Arab mind. There are lots of myths now that are developed about insurgency and resistance. Our sniper, virgin soldiers, you know, bloodless or woundless death - these are things that are talked about within the Sunni community.

The insurgency is also persistent. This is the incident trend ([Slide 3](#)) beginning in the - starting December of '04, of December last year running up to the first week in June. And you can see it goes up and down, but basically it persists. And this slope here - it is the slope leading up to the elections - you have the falloff in activity after the elections and then down here in March or in April, May, June, you begin to see peaks of activity again.

It also persists in individual places. It has proven very difficult for us to secure any area on a permanent basis. The oil-spot theory of counterinsurgency doesn't seem to be working. These are just four towns we selected ([Slide 4](#)). Do you see what happens to Baghdad? It goes up and down, gone up dramatically. So you get these changes in the level of activity, but basically it just continues to go on.

It is also imbedded. I think now in the Sunni community it is hard to say how deeply it is imbedded. There is some level of popular support. It's penetrated in a number of Sunni-Arab institutions and so

on. It is decentralized. There seem to be at least two major elements I think functioning. One is the Ba'athist element and the other is foreign jihadis and they are cooperating.

On the jihadis themselves, I think they have captured the attention and the imagination of people probably more than they deserve, but that can be argued ([Slide 5](#)). There is some issues about numbers and so on. But the effects are for sure there. They produce lots of casualties, horrific images and so on. But they also provide a hard edge to the insurgency. They are a stiffening element. They will do the most terrible things and they set the benchmark for true resistance, pure resistance against the coalition.

And the insurgents are adaptable. This slide here shows how they match weapons to targets ([Slide 6](#)). In the upper left, that is how they attack ministry of defense troops - some of the weapons they use against them. EDs are explosive devices; SA is small arms. On the right here we have how they attack police forces and on the lower part of the slide is how they attack coalition forces, and this just for a period of the first two weeks in June. And you can see they don't attack everybody the same way. They match their efforts according to the target, basically for best results.

And the insurgency is lethal ([Slide 7](#)). One of its main productions is death. They kill lots of people. They kill quite a few Americans, they kill many more Iraqis and so on. And so this lethality is the handmaiden of intimidation. They have an intimidation campaign that operates - that has operated basically since the earliest days in the insurgency aimed at undermining the transitional government, holding the Sunni population enthralled. And the killing supports that.

They also do a lot of things to contribute to instability. And this is the track of the spring bombing, you know, what we call the spring bombing offensive ([Slide 8](#)). It begins in earnest. There is always some level of bombing activity. And these are car bombs or suicide bombs of any type. And it begins to peak at the period of the new formation of the new government and continues along sense then.

As I said, they do a lot of attacks. They carry out a lot of attacks on collaborators ([Slide 9](#)). This is one of their main lines of operations. You can see the peak. This point here represents the fighting at the time of the Mosul and Fallujah events. This is the build up to the election. And these are attacks on government forces, government individuals, people supporting the government. You get the falloff after the elections and then it begins to build back up again as you go into April and May.

Basically we think that the insurgency will persist in its activities over time. This chart ([Slide 10](#)) shows what we call their five lines of operations: counter stability, counter election was the sixth line they added just for the election period, counter reconstruction, counter mobility, counter collaboration, and counter coalition. And all - just basically all insurgent activity fits into one of these - all of their actions fit into one of these categories and you can see how it evolves over and changes over time. And the bottom half shows how it has been conducted basically since the election. And we think they are - fundamentally they are going to continue along those lines.

Since I have got to finish up here, I'll just make a couple of - (chuckles) - on-balance type requirements. The first thing we have to remember and always keep in mind here is that this is in fact a war, and - (chuckles) - war is a contest between at least two sides. And their side holds a lot of cards. They are not just simply responding to our actions. They have a lot of resources and they have a lot of capability to employ those resources.

I think critical for the future is at some point the Sunnis have to see the futility of resistance. The Sunnis as a whole have to see the futility of resistance, the futility of the insurgency. They have to recognize that that is a dead-end street; they can't win. And closely related to that I think is the level of U.S. forces on coalition forces in the country. We have to have enough troops there to do the job and that means basically suppressing the insurgency to a level consistent with our other objectives, giving the ISF time to grow and become effective, extending governance into Sunni areas, and allowing the political process to go forward.

And my own view is that we don't have enough troops there to do that. So instead of talking about withdrawal, the argument - (chuckles) - ought to be turned on its head and we ought to be talking about getting enough forces into Iraq that can create the conditions that support our objectives. And with that I will conclude.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you. Actually, Jeff, two things. First, thank you for the superb presentation. Normally we don't like view graphs or Power Point, which of course are - you know, a weapon of mass

destruction. Death by Power Point is a daily phenomenon in the Pentagon. But you have demonstrated the utility of such things I think quite convincingly.

The last time we discussed Iraq I believe Colonel Lang concluded the discussion by noting that while many of the panelists saw problems in our operations in Iraq that would justify withdrawal, the American public did not see things that way and that proposing solutions to a problem that is not perceived as a problem is an exercise in political futility.

My sense is that in fact people do now see a problem in Iraq and I think Jeff has very succinctly and helpfully reminded us that to the extent that problem has a military solution, it may require a greater investment of resources probably than a lesser one. That raises the question whether it's politically viable even with a greater investment of military resources or whether we have so much at stake in Iraq that we are willing to make that investment. And I'm sure Pat Lang will have a thought or two on these subjects and I turn it over to Pat.

PAT LANG: Good morning. Can everybody hear me? You know, I'm struck by Ambassador Freeman's statement about really, really superb intelligence failures being failures of intellect rather than of data. And in many cases that is really true. I think you could probably argue that that wasn't the case with the 9/11 attacks but in the really big strategic questions, I think that is true.

And you always come back to this business of is the glass half-full, is the glass half-empty. I have been a winner and I have been a loser in the great game of counterinsurgency and been on both sides of that, and it isn't at all clear to me that the present state of affairs makes it very, very clear actually how this business is going to come out in Iraq. And I would easily concede in fact that the glass is half-full. I don't have any problem with that at all.

MR. LANG: But in fact, you know, because a great many things have been accomplished and things on the political side - all of the milestones have been met, forces are in the process of being trained, and as was observed, the United States Army knows how to train troops -- we get it right eventually - and there will be a substantial force there. There have been a lot of civil affairs things done, a lot of infrastructure being created, and it's very hard to argue with the fact that this has done a lot of good.



On the other hand, I am afraid I have the conviction in my heart that in fact what has happened so far is largely irrelevant to the probable outcome of the war in Iraq because I believe there is a basic intellectual failure occurred in the process of deciding what and where and how much we were going to do in Iraq. And you see -- you have heard the essence of this problem explained here this morning. And I'm very lucky, by the way. I don't have to do a data call here today because my colleagues have taken care of that so wonderfully. So I get to just kind of muse on this subject.

But in fact the problem really with this place - Iraq - as in all the other states in the region, except one, is in fact that these places are not nation states. You know, the assumption we went into Iraq with was that Iraq was a nation state and that in fact Iraqis were one people and that they would perceive their interests as being aligned in such a way that once they are released from the tyrant's grasp in fact they would move forward into a bright new dawn. And this was just not correct, in fact. It isn't true of any of these places out there.

It is very easy to fall into that idea because of the fact that these places, as was also said, are all in - have been in the process of becoming nation states ever since the end of the First World War or the end of the Ottoman Empire, the various machinations of the colonial powers. They have been in a kind of pressure cooker trying to become nation states inhabited by a single people in each case. But in fact they weren't anywhere completed anywhere and Iraq was certainly and exemplar of that in fact.

So what has happened is that we - by demolishing the national government of Iraq and its national institutions - the army, the civil service, et cetera, et cetera, even indeed, the much hated despised Ba'ath Party in Iraq, what we did is we screwed the lid off the jar and released all of the inner pressures.

Now, I say that at some risk because somebody will get up to this microphone up here and say to me in fact that I am following the path of the colonialists in seeking to divide them in order that they can - the people of this region can be more easily ruled. Well, you can say that all you like, but in fact I happen to know what the truth is and in fact the truth is that these people are much divided.

And that leads directly to the fact that the general officer who made the statement Ambassador Freeman referred to, in my opinion, if he really meant that, he just doesn't get it in fact because what you have here is you have a number of different peoples, factions, ethnic groups, sectarian groupings of one kind or another all having been released from the coercion in which they were being held in kind of stasis - the Iraqi people, who are now striving to achieve whatever it is they think is in their best interest.

At the same time, do many of them believe in fact that they should be Iraqis and they should feel that way? Of course they do. We all know what our higher aspirations ought to be. But what we really believe in our heart of hearts as to where our real interests lie is another matter. So you have all of these people in fact struggling against each other.

So I would say the Iraqi insurgency, or indeed many insurgencies - it appears to me, after having talked to a bunch of folks who have come back from there and who worked in the business of trying to figure this out, that in fact I really believe there was a stay-behind operation as we would have called it in special forces with regard to resistance to foreign occupation - that there was such a plan and there were caches of material around the country, certain institutions were giving the - mission of handing out weapons to people, which they did.

I had one young woman who is a military intelligence officer ask me why it is that every house they go into in Iraq has at least one or two AK-47s in it and a case of ammunition. And the answer is largely that the previous Iraqi government issued it to people because they had a program of setting up for resistance to occupation. I have had other people tell me that if you go through in the non-jihadi, non-international jihadi vast bulk of the insurgency - and by the way, I think it's not a good idea to keep calling them Ba'athi, Ba'athi, Ba'athi all the time because this really is a term of denigration which leaves - you're minimizing in fact how substantial they really are.

But if you look at those groups, and the many different groups that are centered by personality and region and tribe and one thing or another - former military unit, whatever - if you get down, winnow down through these things, you find at the heart of each of these groups that there one or two guys who used to be officers in the Iraqi Army and who - on a rough kind of basis coordinate the actions of these groups in such a way that you can see shifts in targeting strategy and you can see trends in doing this and that. It cannot be all together happenstance for that to occur in that way.

So I think you have a lot of different things like that going on at the same time. Supposedly, this same senior American officer wanted to know why - that he couldn't understand all of this because in fact they weren't coordinated enough. Well, I would say to you this is early days yet. I mean, if you want to make the analogy of the great Vietnam thing, which was the greatest insurgency thing of all time probably, it wasn't until about 1949 or '50 that the Vietminh got everybody in the country sorted out who was fighting the French and unified them under communist command so that you didn't have a multiplicity of groups that weren't just loosely coordinating with each other.

So what are we into this? We are into the second, third year of the war. Give them two or three more years of this going on and you'll probably see them under the hammer of our pressure unified more and more with the jihadis kind of standing off to one side. But they are going to go in that direction and you can see that it is almost inevitable that that will happen. And the reason the thing got started so fast was that there was an existing, in my opinion, plan for the generation of resistance throughout the country. And that is why it got started up so quickly.

Now, I think you have to be very, very careful about a number of things you want to say. Now, my dear old friend and colleague, Jeff down here, thinks we ought to have more troops in the country. And I would think that if we are going to persist there that would certainly be a good idea. I just don't know where we are going to get them, you know. I have a difficult time with that and I'm sure he does too. How much more can we use the National Guard? How many more rotations can we have with shorter tours of duty, of regular Army and Marine Corps units? Now, there is a limit to what you can ask people to do in fact under those conditions.

So there is a question as to where you will get these people. Everybody here knows that the return to a draft is politically impossible and that in fact you don't get much out of a draft anyway; you get a lot of semi-trained privates who are 20 years old and you have to cadre your other units to get leaders and then you generate units. You have got another two or three years there in order to generate a brigade or a division. You know, this is a long and slow process if you do that.

So you really can't do that I don't think. On the other hand, people want to talk about a quick withdrawal from Iraq, setting a timetable. I am against setting a timetable because that really will telegraph your actions to the insurgents in fact. And you have to consider the fact that we have now done this and when we withdrawal, we will have to live with the consequences of what we have done because anybody who knows what happened in Vietnam, what happened in Algeria, what happened in this place and that place know that a great many native peoples who sided with the foreign army suffered horribly as a result of that, suffered horribly.

Think of how many millions of Vietnamese left. Think of all the thousands and thousands of Algerian dock workers and things like this - were put to the sword literally by the FLN when the French Navy left Oran and places like that. Think about that. You have to start dealing with the idea - what are you going to do with refugees in this country if you pull out all of the sudden. So this is not a very good idea either.

The other thing you have to consider is to what extent is the Iraqi example typical of every other place in the region. And Ambassador Freeman likes to quote my one inspired moment I think in which I said that we have probably not invaded the real Iraq; we had invaded the Iraq of our dreams. But in fact, if you look around at these other places, to what extent are we not doing the same thing there.

Look at Lebanon. Look at the incredible claims that have been made with regard to Lebanon in the aftermath of Rafik Hariri assassination, that everything would be wonderful, it would be a wonderful democracy, a completely new system of government would exist, all of that kind of business. In fact, what is emerging from their political process is simply a reshuffling of the deck with the same players coming up with very substantial control of the government and with Hezbollah having a yet larger and stronger role in the functioning of the government.

You can look around at other places around the region. Are they that much different? I mean, look at Iran. We have been claiming in fact that - it's clear we have had in mind that a youth-led revolution was about to occur in Iran that would bring to power a pro-Western government, which would probably ensure the good behavior of the Shi'a Iraqi government. Is that what it looks like today in the election? I don't think so. So we have to be very careful that we stop in fact projecting ourselves onto these people and start trying to understand them for what they are. Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you very much. I think Jeff said that the key to success against the insurgency, which is what we have been discussing today, is to convince them that resistance is futile and that they cannot win. And I think we have just heard a very good point made that we are getting much better at combating these various insurgencies, but the insurgents are getting much better at combating us. And in fact, one of the major concerns in the region, which I have just returned from, is that the large number of jihadis going into Iraq are receiving the world's best training from the world's best-armed forces about how to conduct urban operations and will in time go home or re-deploy elsewhere in the Islamic world or perhaps even to our homeland.

Do we really have the option of hanging on - this question of where additional forces, if they are required, would come from really is crucial. I mean, do we have that option? If we don't then we're probably wasting time talking about it. And I think that my final point is that the fact that we will be held accountable for the consequences of our intervention in Iraq is unassailable. So the question is then, since that intervention presumably will not last forever - it will end somehow, sometime - how do we mitigate those consequences? How do we reduce those consequences so that we can live with ourselves morally?

And I guess the final point is I'm delighted at the discussion and the quality of the presentations today. I don't think you can solve a problem if you don't understand it. And I think the level of expertise on the military level that has been demonstrated here is a prerequisite to beginning to consider what we do in a situation that clearly is not getting better. But this of course brings us to reality-based analysis (which is out of favor in Washington), and it reinforces the political incorrectness of this entire gathering, I suppose.

We now turn to the question/comment section and several old timers know the rules and have immediately put their hands up. If you do that, I will note down who you are and then I will call on you in sequence. And, Jeff, you're first. You're second. You're third. You're fourth. Please tell us who you are.

Q: My name is Jeff Steinberg. I'm with EIR Magazine. There's another aspect of the Iraq situation that's been a point of great confusion to me and I'm hoping maybe the panelists can comment on this,

which is that it's not clear to me that there's really just one occupation of Iraq. I'm confused about what the objective of the occupation is. Some people seem to think that there's an element of a permanent or semi-permanent military presence to secure the oil fields. Others say that we want to bring stability and leave. It seemed at one point that we were pursuing a kind of traditional occupation, utilizing the nationals and as much of the existing governing infrastructure to put things together quickly. Then we de-Baathified and reduced the military to nothing and seemed to adopt a sort of a Shiite-only strategy with a Kurdish corollary to that. And in the recent period, it seems that Rumsfeld and Rice and Zoellick have been running over there to make sure that the Sunnis get a greater share of the action. And I wonder whether that's going to produce the long-awaited other shoe dropping, namely, some kind of much more substantial Shiite opposition to the U.S. presence. So I'm wondering - and then the final thing is that there's an overt American and British component to the coalition occupation. I'm not sure that American and British interests are identical there, and then there's the issue that Ivan raised about the Israeli presence, which is sort of a - (inaudible) - factor, but they're a regional power as well with their own interests. So I'm hoping possibly some clarification on what the actual U.S. objectives are there.

MR. FREEMAN: I think that's a very apposite set of issues to raise. I'm sure all of the panelists will want to dive in. It does bring us back to the statement of the president that we don't have an exit strategy; we have a success strategy. But if you don't define what success is, it's pretty hard to know what that means. And I'd like to ask the panelists to tell us what they think success will be. Pat, you start.

MR. LANG: Well, I think that at this point, and you have to figure from this point - you know, you can't go back a few years and say what you think ought to have been about something like this because you actually are in the situation. I think that what we have to try to do is to try to influence the Iraqis, all the different kinds of them, in fact, to create a sufficiently stable situation so that we can justify our own withdrawal. I don't think our presence there has anything to do with strategic basing. If anybody ever had that fantasy, they gave it up a long time ago, I think, probably at one of the crests in Jeff's charts. And I don't think it has to do with our wanting to own their oil. We just want them to sell their oil because of the - you know, the more oil in the market, the cheaper the price and it's much too expensive now. So the only thing I think we could possibly have as a goal is to achieve sufficient stability so that the resistance dies down to a level at which we are justified in withdrawing our forces. I don't know what else you could do.

MR. FREEMAN: Ivan, would you like to comment?

MR. ELAND: Yeah, I think that - I'm pretty much a radical on this. I think we lost the war a long time ago and we just don't know it yet. But I think the president actually could get out of this by realizing that Iraq is a fantasy and that he should encourage the groups to form a loose confederation or maybe, even partition the country, and that's the best - there are a lot of problems with that, too, but I think we're so far in the hole that that's about the only thing that can have a chance of achieving long-term stability in that area. I think the real problem is that everybody wants to control the central government in Iraq because traditionally the central government - whichever group controls it oppresses the other groups. And of course, it's been the Sunni that controlled the government. But now the Shi'a and the Kurds are trying to control it.

But I don't think any group is going to be able to achieve that and I think there's so many militia running around and we haven't talked about those, but it's going to be impossible to get rid of those because no one has confidence that the Americans are going to stay long enough to do this. What the insurgents want to do is what the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong did is just outwait the stronger party - and when there's talk of withdrawal in Washington, the Sunni guerillas are emboldened. And all the other groups start saying, well, gee, I wonder what we do when the Americans pull out and the popular opinion tanks, which is already has, what do we do? Well, we keep our militias.

Well, it seemed to me that the South Vietnamese government had a problem dealing with the Viet Cong when they had a standing force available. We dismantled the force and are now trying to create a security force with the Sunni insurgents who are actively attacking the police to discourage people from signing up and attacking security forces. So I don't see this getting any better, and I think the president could say, if he were to be able to reach some sort of a confederation or partition that he had genuinely dismantled the Saddam Hussein regime and he gave the Iraqis the best chance for stability and prosperity. And it would give him an interesting way to get out of it.

But I think security could be provided on the local basis by the militias and of course, in the Sunni

areas by what is now the insurgency. You could have an economic confederation so that you still have a large market, et cetera. And maybe if people weren't scared that the central government was going to oppress them and if they had local autonomy, some sort of a confederation might be the best thing because then there would be less of a problem with groups falling on the other side of the border.

MR. FREEMAN: Well, that's a question, and everybody does want to weigh in. I think the question of confederation, however, misses the key point. What is the basis for stability in Iraq if it's not based on this majority? And the majority is Shi'a and they want control of Iraq. And the issue is how much, how many rights they are prepared to grant to others. So the question then is, to go back to Jeff White's formulation, if the answer is a Shi'a majority-controlled regime in Iraq, at what point do Kurds or Sunni insurgents conclude that resistance to that is futile, because if they don't, then you're there preventing a civil war or participating in one.

MR. LANG: Well, I don't know in what sense we're not already involved in civil war there. If you look in the dictionary, I think we're avoiding the word civil war, because it gives a sort of dignity to the insurgents who then have this more or less status of belligerence. Nobody wants to do it. If you look in the dictionary, it says quite clearly that civil war is a war fought within the boundaries of one state by ethnic or religious or political factions for control of the state. If that's not what's going on, I don't know what the word means. It doesn't make any sense. I think we're just doing that because it's politically inconvenient for us to call it a civil war. And the news media, astonishingly, go right along with that.

I will also say that I think the idea of confederation is probably a lovely idea but I don't think it is very well received in the Arab or Islamic world where the ideal is unity, not that kind of dissipated authority. In fact, you look around in the history of the Arab world, you don't see too many confederations. There's the Federation of South Arabia, which the British tried to set up, which fell flat on its nose very quickly. Then you have, of course, the U.A.E., which was a federation of more-or-less absolute monarchs, one of whom was appointed to be president of the federation. I don't think that's a good example either.

And lastly, I think you need to be real careful about the South Vietnamese example because in fact there were three wars going on in Vietnam. One was the war against the guerilla militias and terrorists, the people like that, which was more-or-less analogous in some ways to what's going on in Iraq. Then there was a war of the main force units, out in the bush, where they had regiments and divisions with armor and artillery, and these are the people who defeated the French Union forces at Dien Bien Phu and gave us one hell of a run for our money. And you don't have anything like that in Iraq and are unlikely to have it in my opinion. So we're talking about the government being able to overcome the guerilla enemy rather than the main force enemy. You know, good old 325th NEA division, who I used to know well. And so I think this is a different situation.

MR. FREEMAN: I think Ivan, we're going to let you have at this again later but the others should go first. I just note that there is one often-missed analogy between Vietnam and Iraq, namely, the majority of French casualties were caused by suicide bombers in the period leading up to Dien Bien Phu. So this is not a new invention of the weak. It is something that occurs repeatedly throughout history.

COL. NEWMAN: Just going back to the original question, I'm aware of no hidden agendas or plans for the creation of strategic military bases or occupation of the oil fields, and agree with Pat Lang that only a madman would think that would be a feasible course of action. There have been others that thought that we could have long-term massive facilities in the heart of the Arab Middle East for long periods of time. And including after the first Gulf War, there were a lot of people who thought there had been a paradigm shift with our relationship in Saudi Arabia and that was a very difficult period. As I remember, my Ambassador had the great difficulty in convincing a lot of people in Washington that that wasn't the case.

MR. FREEMAN: Jeff?

MR. WHITE: Well, I think that Pat Lang's formulation of the strategic dilemma the United States finds itself in right now is quite accurate and Bob agreed with it as well. In my mind though, there's always been this tension in the American approach to Iraq between winning and getting out. Gen. Conway said that our objective is to win in Iraq and not to withdraw. If that's true, there are certain conditions that have to be met for winning. Equally, if our overall objective is to get out as Pat suggested, there are certain things that we ought to be doing. But I don't think that that dilemma between winning, however you define that, and getting out has ever been fully resolved and that has lead to a lot of the problems we have experienced in Iraq. It relates to issues of how many forces, the political solution,

the transfer of sovereignty, all those issues are connected to that unresolved contention in our policy.

MR. FREEMAN: I think that it is very clear in any event that it's not about oil. Ironically, of course Iraq was a secure supplier and reliable supplier of oil under Saddam, but has not been since Saddam was overthrown.

Q: Good Morning my name is Babak Rahimi from the Senior Fellow at the US Institute of Peace. I have three questions for Col. Newman. Do we know of any Shia militias that are loyal to Ayatollah Sistani, and if so, how organized are they? Second, do we have any information of Iran actually aiding directly people like Muqtada Sadr and Abu Hattem? Also, do we know of direct links between Hezbollah and the Sadrists?

COL. NEWMAN: Ayatollah Sistani does not have a militia, because militias are, number one, illegal under the TAL, and he would not directly violate the TAL. But he does have a bunch of guys with guns in Najaf, who were key in ensuring his safety and that of his immediate family and other members during both of the serious bouts of fighting. But they are very small in number compared to rumored numbers of Jaysh al-Mahdi of Sadr or the Badr brigades who also at different times have come to his assistance when necessary.

The issue of Iranian presence and assistance; it has been reported on several occasions that we have found Iranian-made arms inside of Iraq. Each of the Sh'ia militia groups, particularly the Sadrists is very confusing as to what their goals and objectives are. In the case of Lebanese Hezbollah's connection, I'm not sure again. At different times there were claims that they had ties to Iraqi Hezbollah, Abdul Karim Mahoud al-Dowe, Abu Hattem, but I'm not sure about that because his political agenda is simplistic at best, apparently. The ties between Lebanese Hezbollah and the Sadrists, there should be a lot of them. Since Mohammad Bakr Sadr, another kinsman of Muqtada Sadr who was killed/martyred in 1980 is a spiritual father not only of the Dawa party, Lebanese Hezbollah as well as Musa Sadr the godfather of Lebanese Hezbollah, that's another kinsman. There should be ties there, I don't know that we've seen those. And except in the case of one individual who had some ties, I don't know if they're just familial ties.

MR. FREEMAN: Recently, to continue this - and I think Colonel Lang has a comment - recently, the foreign minister of Iran Mr. Kharrazi drove from Tehran to Baghdad, apparently without much concern for his personal security through zones that apparently we can't travel without heavy armored contingents. That really got the attention of people in the region, in terms of driving home the extent to which Iran has made political gains in Iraq. And it has led to a rising concern in the Sunni-dominated societies of the Arabian Peninsula that somehow the United States may either deliberately or inadvertently be creating a Shi'a crescent stretching from Lebanon to Syria and Iraq to Iran. And that this in turn, if one imagines the war going on in Iraq for some time to come, there is this interesting prospect of the civil war between Shi'a and Sunnis internationalizing itself, something somewhat on the model of Spain in the 1930s, not a pleasant prospect at all, but one that should be flagged. Pat.

MR. LANG: Well, you know, there's history to be looked at in this matter, and then there's geopolitical logic, and in the matter of history, there are a lot of people around who are apologists for the Islamic Republic government of Iran. I am not one of them and have never been. In fact, it is very clear to me, having followed this subject for a long period of time when I was in government and after I was in government, that if you want to look around for a government, which stands at the very heart of support to jihadi groups, those Sunni and Shi'a both, often times as a kind of a equal opportunity help base, you should look to Tehran. And they continue to do that. This is one thing.

I don't think you have to think about whether the Sadrists, the Jaysh al-Mahdi in Iraq is connected to Hezbollah. That's unnecessary. In fact, anybody who really thinks about it and knows about it knows that in fact Hezbollah's external relations run up their Ho Chi Minh trail through the Bekaa Valley, over the Mountains of Damascus, through Damascus International Airport to Tehran. That's where they go. Even if we now like to talk about the Syrians running Hezbollah, the Syrians don't run Hezbollah. They have tolerated Hezbollah and sought to use it as a lever against Israel and other people like that. But in fact, the Iranians are right at the heart of this business.

And why should we be concerned about what Ambassador Freeman just said. Well, everybody talks about how the Iraqi Shi'a are the majority in Iraq. That may well be so. But in fact, as you look at the Islamic world as a whole or even the Arab world as a whole, the Sh'ia are in fact a really rather small minority surrounded in fact by masses of Sunni Arabs, Pakistanis, Tajiks of one form or another, everywhere, all over the places. And so, as was said, there's a great deal of concern in the Sunni

Islamic world about the fact that if these people are going to rule Iraq in a place where they never ruled before, and runs the risk of an unending series of tensions and possible wars which could degenerate at any time into a really bad situation.

So if you think about it, an Iraqi Shi'a government will have no choice whether they wish to be subordinated to the Iranians or not, of drifting in their direction, because for them, they're the only show in town, the only real source of their external support. So I think that it's almost inevitable that if you have an Iraqi Shi'a government, they will be pushed by external pressure and internal revolt more and more in the direction of leaning on Iran.

(Audio break, tape change.)

MR. WHITE: There are a lot of stories extant about who is working with Muqtada al-Sadr and helping him and so on, and the Iranians are frequently named in those stories. There's no proof that I know of out there at the moment. But it fits the situation, as Bob Newman said. Muqtada al-Sadr suffered a significant defeat, first in April, and then in August of '04. And usually when you get defeated, you go out looking for help. And we did see some increase in Muqtada al-Sadr's military capability and capacity. Now between the April and August uprisings, there is even rumors that he was getting help from the Baathists. So the fact that there may be some Iranian assistance going to him would not be at all surprising and it would be pretty consistent.

I guess one thing I'm more concerned about than that, which has, as Pat said, a very strong logic to it is the possibility of an emerging connection between Muqtada al-Sadr and the Sunni Arab resistance. Politically, it's already there, to some extent. Muqtada al-Sadr has said a lot of things that basically support the Sunni Arab insurgency, the Sunni Arab position in Iraq over time. I suspect - I don't know - but I suspect there is some kind of military or assistance component that we can't see that's at the covert level. And that's one thing I think we ought to look for is to see how that relationship goes. Sadr and his group established a connection with the Sunnis very quickly after April 2003 through Mohammed al-Kubaisi. So there is something that's been going on - I think - there for a long, long time.

MR. FREEMAN: Ivan?

MR. ELAND: Well, I was just going to say that the Shi'a definitely do want a strong, central government in Iraq. But I think they're going to find over time that they can't control all of Iraq without the United States. So I think there's an incentive to them to compromise on some sort of a confederation, which may eventually lead to partition. I just see no - going back to what Patrick Lang said - that Iraq is not really a nation. Maybe a state, but if we have these groups that really don't want to be a part of it - certainly the Kurds don't want to be a part of Iraq.

And I think also we have the problem that there's no rule of law in Iraq, so majority rule is somewhat of a nonsensical concept. The key thing that you want to have in any liberal democracy is rights of the minority and that's what they're fighting for, I think. And the Shiites will be fighting for it too, if they can't control a government. So all the groups will want control of the government, a strong central government if you have one. So that's why I say that people may not want to accept my solution at this point in time, but I think the only viable solution is some sort of fundamental dismemberment of Iraq in one way or another.

And I think as far as what we were just talking about a minute ago where the Shi'ite Iran will have influence over a rump state, for the Shi'a in Southern Iraq. But I think frankly that we're probably just going to have to live with that because as I say, we're too far in the horn. And I don't think that's completely catastrophic.

MR. FREEMAN: As I think Colonel Newman pointed out, Iraq's neighbors might have something to say about that sort of outcome, but I thank you for laying that possibility out in the open.

Q: John Duke Anthony, National Council on U.S.-Arab relations. Three issues, and not addressed by anyone, but all seem to be relevant here and would invite comment. And some context and perspective of any the panelists on the following: One, teeing off the most recent aspect of it is taken about the concern about a Shi'a arc from Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, Iran. But what are the implications for Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia, and not just for those status quo at the governments at the moment, but U.S. interest in policies - key foreign policy objectives - especially in Kuwait, especially in Bahrain, and not least either in terms of Saudi Arabia, where we're talking about the jugular of parts of the world economy.

Secondly, the aspect of the Kurds constituting three of Iraq's eighteen provinces, and the key provisions and concept in the talks of the interim constitution being that any three provinces would have a de facto veto on anything that the other 15 agreed to. Where does that concept stand now and what are the prospects for it being retained in the actual constitution to be negotiated, and might that be the unraveling of the unitary state in and of itself.

And lastly, I agree with Pat Lang's statement that we deal with the here and the now, not the back then. But the Downing Street memo, which seemed to have implications for the here and now, if it's true that public opinion or public support for the war has tanked. What do any of you see as the possible likely implications of this, as one person on the Lehrer show last evening implied it could be - an unraveling of the order of Watergate, which perhaps was an exaggeration, but it still would invite anyone's comment?

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you. That's a rich agenda. Who would like to lead off on implications for Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia?

COL. NEWMAN: Can I?

MR. FREEMAN: Yes.

COL. NEWMAN: We've not had an Arab Shi'a state. Juan Cole has described the very nascent stage of Arab Shi'a politics as being minority politics. And he talks that it's very difficult - and I agree with him - to know what an Iraqi Shi'a majority state will do in the future. Their militia, just like their politics, are at very nascent stages when you compare them with Kurds, for instance, who many people talked about - you know, the Kurds - prior to 1991, that Kurds were capable of self-rule. And we've seen what they've done over the last fourteen years. And of course, as I said, every Iraq Shi'a that I talk with stresses again and again - and of course they're trying to make that point to me, I know - that they are independent of Iran and will be independent of Iran. That said, there are going to be all sorts of cultural and other necessary political things - the reaction of all these other Arab governments. It's key that we're going to have to continue to heavily engage, because that's going on right now with the rest of the Arab world. We've also got to find a different paradigm for dealing with Iran on low-level tactical, operational issues that we face right now because of our presence in Afghanistan and in Iraq. We are extremely vulnerable to misunderstandings and that makes it much more apparent to me that we have to have a multi-lateral approach to be able to deal with that.

The de facto veto, obviously, that's one of the biggest issues that the constitutional drafting committee is facing. Reportedly, Ayatollah Sistani was against that initially. The Kurds insisted upon it. That's one of the many, many difficult issues that they've got to resolve, and of course, we're still working on the membership of that committee, prior to August 15th to stay on schedule. And I have no comment on the Downing Street memo. (Chuckles.)

MR. FREEMAN: Pat.

MR. LANG: Well, you know, it's been much written about that the interface process between strategic intelligence and policy decision making was just completely, totally out of whack in the period before we made the decision to go to war. It's been written about by a lot of people including me, and I think that it just isn't useful anymore to talk about it very much, because we're committed to what we're doing. The thing to do is to try and ensure that we don't make similar mistakes based on the fact that we go into countries on the basis of a projection of our own ideas that don't really exist in their own minds. If we do that, we'll end up over and over again not fighting in the real place, but in some other place that we imagine they're in. And when that happens to you, then you have very severe problems. They go on for a very long time. So I think that's - I was just thinking about it here, the only Shi'a-ruled state in the Arab world I can think of was the Fatimid Caliphate in the Middle Ages, but it's been awhile. But as I recall, they weren't treated with great friendliness by the Sunni powers around them either, but it was a while ago.

MR. FREEMAN: I think the point on the domestic American political part of this is, at this point, imponderable. There has been implicit in this situation, however, from the beginning, the possibility of some reenactment of the Vietnam divisions in the United States over this question. So far we have been spared that, but it has been by the absence of debate rather than by an intelligent debate conducted in the civil fashion. And what I am concerned about is that the suffocation of debate, which has occurred may be succeeded by an explosion of emotion and that issues like the Downing Street Memo will in fact be seen as so discrediting the credibility of our government that we will - as in the case of Vietnam - suffer a severe national trauma. But we're not there yet.

Q: My name is Yazid Frikori (ph). I'm with the AADC, the American Arab anti-Discrimination Committee. Mr. Lang referred to a generation of resistance and I thought that was a very interesting idea. Mr. White also referred to appealing to Sunnis to try to - you know, the futility of resistance - to try to bring them into the political process. But I think I'm more compelled to side with Mr. Lang on this issue in thinking that it doesn't seem plausible that the Sunnis will be willing to participate in the political process, at least at this point. Maybe many of them see through the duplicity of America's policy in that region, at least in their perspective.

If we're to assume that Mr. Lang is right and the resistance continues primarily amongst the Sunni community in that facet with any rank in society, what implications does that have for long-term stability, not just in Iraq, but in the region. And could a potential situation arise where groups who are now cooperative in the occupation of Iraq, mainly, the Shi'as and the Kurds, is there potential for them to turn against the occupation if instability in Iraq persists?

MR. FREEMAN: Good question. Jeff, would you like to lead off since you were cited?

MR. WHITE: Okay, first of all, I don't want to be mistaken for being an optimist on the situation in Iraq. I prefaced my remarks with the comment that there was a number of things going right, but there is all of these elements of intractability in the situation. We have to try with the Sunnis. If we're going to have a stable Iraq, then somehow the Sunnis have to be brought into it and included in that process. Not all of them, some element of the Sunni resistance is going to continue forever, I think. Iraq is going to have a long and violent political history ahead of it. It could look something like Weimar Germany over time with groups that are opposed maybe even in the political process, but fundamentally opposed to the nature of the state, and so on. So I think that's kind of maybe the best future we can hope for in a lot of ways. But we've got to try and bring the Sunnis in.

My point is that you have to convince them that they can't win the other way, and they've got to have that psychological transformation within the Sunni community, not amongst people that are already in the government, and already supporting the government, already involved in the spoils system, already have jobs and positions, but other people that actually represent the insurgency, represent resistance. They need to be brought in somehow. An analogy I've used is in 1942 the French people made a decision that the Germans were going to lose the war and that effectively undermined the entire structure of collaboration and it gave great strength to the resistance in France. We need to bring about a conversion like that if we're going to succeed. I'm not sure we can do it.

MR. LANG: Well, I think you know that the - I don't think it's actually possible to convince them that they can't succeed in this way, because the evidence all runs in the other direction. If the greatest power on Earth has not succeeded in subjugating them thus far, who are really ill-equipped, fairly small, a bunch of people with not a lot of weaponry, there's no reason they shouldn't think as long as they have some support in the Sunni Arab population that they can't go on forever. And it isn't inconceivable that whatever government sits in Baghdad will not really control all the territory in the country. I mean, I once lived in Yemen for a number of years and I know - some Yemeni is going to attack me now - but in fact the government there in fact does not control the whole country and never did when I was there anyway. There were large parts of the country that were effectively places the government's writ didn't run unless they went in with a battalion of troops and some tanks and something like that.

So you could very easily have a situation like that in which a large part of Iraq just remains with Ibn-Khuldoon (ph) called the "land of insolence" - (in Arabic) - and in fact that could go on for a long period of time. What I'm afraid of is that this situation will translate itself in other places as well, like Lebanon and other places that we may, by our very well meaning efforts destabilize the situation and create an analogous state of insurrection in the country as the various parts vie with each other.

MR. FREEMAN: Ivan.

MR. ELAND: Well, I think that the Sunnis won't participate in the political process because they think American credibility is low, but I also think it's because they think that after the Americans leave that whatever system is set up will disenfranchise them and there will be paybacks for what they did when they ruled Iraq. The key problem in Iraq is not to establish a majority vote. As I say in the now rule of law, that's somewhat of a joke. What we have is, the key thing is to stop an armed minority from rioting, and the only way you can do that in my view, is to make them feel more secure about their eventual fate.

And to me, the confederation or partition is the only way to do that. And as for the Iraq neighbors, Turkey certainly would not be for something like that, a partition or confederation. But the Turks are trying to get into the EU and I think even the Turkish Kurds might be less willing to join any sort of Kurdish state, simply because if Turkey does get into the EU, they'll be more prosperous than their neighboring Kurdish population. So there are things to quiet down the neighbors on the partition issue as well. If Turkey does anything rash, they certainly won't get into the EU and that's really a major goal for them.

So I think you have to put yourself in the Sunnis' shoes, and I think they are fighting - of course they're not nice people not necessarily all of them - and we would say that the insurgents haven't behaved very well doing terrorist strikes and everything, but I don't think you can dismiss them as just a bunch of thugs. They did rule Iraq and they did it in a very brutal fashion, but now they are scared of paybacks. And I think that the Sunni interests are going to have to be looked after because after all, right now, they're the principal insurgents.

MR. FREEMAN: The level of civility in Iraq has significantly deteriorated over the last several years. Pat's mention of Yemen and the level of anarchy in Yemen reminds me of a story, which I will share with you with your permission, sir, of a way in which violent kidnappings were conducted in Yemen. This was the Chinese military attaché who drove out of Sanaa into the mountains and was accosted by guys with guns - your kind of guys - and who said that they needed his jeep. And the attaché got out and he said, but how am I going to get back? And they said, well, we'll call you a cab. And he said, but I don't have any money, so they gave him some money and called him a cab and drove off in his jeep. Unfortunately, this level of exquisite Arab politeness does not exist in Iraq anymore.

Sir?

Q: Hi, I'm Bob Dreyfuss. I'm with Rolling Stone Magazine. I wanted to come back and ask the panel about the so-called Downing Street Memo, but not because of the past, but because of the current situation. The idea that the intelligence and facts were being fixed around the policy is something I've written extensively about over the last four years, including the Pentagon's so-called Office of Special Plans and all of that. Now the kind of pessimism we're hearing today is certainly not reflected in information or statements coming out of the White House or the vice president's office and others.

So the question therefore I'm asking is, is the intelligence and facts being fixed around the policy still? What accounts for the contrasts between what I've heard today and the optimism that's coming from the White House? We have a new director of National Intelligence. We have a new CIA director. We have new people in place. Wolfowitz and Fyfe are gone. Is information about the reality that we're facing in Iraq still getting - is it getting to the policymakers or maybe the question is are the policymakers still able to intimidate and politicize the intelligence system enough that this information simply gets squashed or left undelivered? Where do we stand on that and is there any chance that this reality might sort of penetrate the brains of the seemingly impenetrable people who are running the White House?

MR. FREEMAN: Wow. So your question is, is there a cure for political autism? And the answer is yeah, there are elections in this country. But short of that there probably -

Q: We had one.

MR. FREEMAN: Yeah, we just had one and this issue wasn't really discussed somehow, which is fairly amazing. My own sense - and there are intelligence professionals who are here on this panel who will want to comment - but my own sense in many years of dealing with the intelligence community in the United States government is that it is composed of people with a very high level of intellectual integrity who do not make a habit of mincing words when they do their analysis. So, to the extent that the views that you have heard here represent expert opinion inside the U.S. government as well as outside it, and nobody here is in the intel business in the U.S. government at the present time, so we can't be sure - but to the extent that we're describing the reality that is objectively verifiable, I would have a very high level of confidence that that reality is also being described in the intelligence analysis and reporting, which brings me to a number of observations.

Various professions have various attributes. Courage is very important for soldiers. Optimism is very important for diplomats. Autism may be very important for presidents. This is not an administration that has ever admitted an error, as far as I'm aware, maybe because they never committed one. It remains to be seen, so I'm not sure that there is an answer to your question. But in terms of what is going on

inside the U.S. government, I continue to have a very high level of respect and confidence for the people who do the reporting and analysis. I don't know whether you would like to comment, and Jeff, and maybe the colonel probably will not want to comment on this highly political issue.

MR. LANG: Well, you know, I think to some extent the presence on this panel of Jeff White and Colonel Newman distorts slightly the viewpoint because in fact they are two of the best in my whole experience of life. I know them both extremely well and the quality of their effort and intellect is probably right at the top of what's available to the U.S. government and has been available to the U.S. government.

Now, I would maintain that policy makers, whether they are autistic or not, have a right to formulate their policies. But what I do object to about people doing is to try to maintain that they form those policies on the basis of advice given to them by the intelligence community. I think that is a distortion of the natural law sort of, of how government ought to work in fact.

But there also is a room for a good deal of blame to the intelligence community, I think. I've been trying to say this for a couple years now and it's not something most people want to publish. That is the fact that, in my opinion, there was a real failure and perhaps there is a continuing failure of leadership in the intelligence community, because it is a function of the leaders at the very top of these agencies at the national level here to back their people. You know, and I was just as difficult then, when I was a senior person in the intelligence community, as I am now. I've been in many situations in which the director of DIA or some other senior officer has told the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff or the secretary of Defense or some powerful Senator, no, we will not say that. We will not say that. We know what the truth is. We will tell the truth. It is our duty. Now, you can't tell me that that's what happened in the run-up to this latest war in the ranks of the leadership of the intelligence community, because if these guys had stood their ground and refused to allow their people to be pushed around, then in fact, we would not have gone into a situation in which we completely misinterpreted what the realities were in the real world.

So I think there's that failure, too. Whether or not that's been corrected, I don't know. I don't think, from looking out there right now, it looks all that much as though it's been thoroughly fixed. Drawing a bunch of boxes on a line-and-block diagram as to how you reorganize this or that doesn't mean a thing to me. What counts is the quality of the guts and the integrity in the people who have to back the analysts and the field collectors and approve operations that are dangerous and things like that. So far, I haven't seen it. I hope it's there.

MR. FREEMAN: I might say, Pat said that nobody would publish his view, but a past issue of Middle East Policy did publish an article called, "Drinking the Kool-Aid," which was precisely on this issue by Col. Lang. Jeff?

MR. WHITE: I was out of the intelligence community before the war began. I left in October of '02. I'll say quite frankly that up until that point I had seen no distortion of the information going forward. I didn't see everything, but I didn't see - in my own mind, I was not seeing any distortion of the information. A lot of uncertainties, things we didn't know enough about and so on, but I did not see distortion of the information up to the point I left the government.

One of the problems in Iraq, of course, is that lots of things are open to interpretation. There are many, many - because of difficulties in information collection, analysis, and so on, there are a lot of things about the insurgency and the situation in Iraq that are poorly understood, controversial, or where there is differing and well-founded points of view. So it isn't like everybody in the intelligence community, everybody in the analytical community broader defined, really knows what's going on and they're all telling the decision makers the same thing, I believe. So those people are probably getting some conflicting views on the situation.

That said, though, I think what's happening over time now is that the harsh realities of Iraq are becoming more and more apparent to a broader and broader sector of people interested in Iraqi affairs there. It's driven home by casualties, by debates, and so on. And you can see, just in the open-source reporting, a lot of very good stuff in the Washington Post, in the New York Times, and so on, some very interesting comments coming out of soldiers and officers in the field about the difficulties of the situation. So my sense is that overall - now whether or not this has reached into the White House or whatever, I can't say what's in their hearts and minds on this issue - but overall, I get a feeling that there is this increasing sense of the harsh reality of the situation in Iraq and the long-term intractable difficulties that we face there.

MR. FREEMAN: There is the beginning of a debate, I think, actually probably about the wrong issue, which is setting a date for withdrawal. I, like everyone else on the panel, have severe difficulty with that approach. But at least it has the merit of providing an excuse for a hearing or two and for discussion of what is happening, which has been notably absent. We're in the halls of Congress. This institution has largely defaulted. I shouldn't say largely; it has essentially defaulted on its work making authority and perhaps it will discover a means of reasserting its authority.

Q: Youssef Manara (ph), from American Arab anti-Discrimination Committee. It seems to me that we're talking a lot now about how we cannot in any way use the option of increasing our forces in Iraq, and at the same time, we cannot comfortably talk about withdrawing, both because we cannot leave Iraq in the state that it is and because talking about withdrawing will affect the reaction of the insurgency against us. So it seems to me, and one of my questions is, is it fair to say that we have effectively placed ourselves now in a position where we have taken the control of the future directly out of our hands?

Secondly, we talk a lot about Shiites and Sunnis and Kurds, and what is constantly overlooked is that the Kurds are mostly, as I understand it, Sunnis, and we fail to acknowledge that reality. Has there been any movement to try to form policy in Iraq to create broader identities, a broader Iraqi identity, or create some kind of cooperation or some kind of systems based on an identity that's less sectarian? Thank you.

MR. FREEMAN: In other words, returning to the situation before the invasion, in some respects. Jeff, would you like to lead off on this, and I'm sure everyone will have a comment.

MR. WHITE: I'd focus on the issue of the control of our future. Yeah, I think, to an extent, it is out of our hands - out of our hands when we transitioned sovereignty to the Iraqis almost a year ago now. And it has increasingly passed out of our hands as the political transformation process went forward. We're no longer in a position where we can simply dictate what goes on in the country, if we ever were. We were never in that position. But our ability to shape, influence, decisively direct matters in Iraq has declined. We now have to deal with an entity that has some kind of real legitimacy, even if it's legitimacy only in two of the major three parts of Iraq. So yeah, we don't have the forces there to bring about anything remotely like a decisive military end, even if that's possible in an insurgency. So again, it's another factor. We don't control the future. We can shape it; we can help influence it; we can try and push it in the direction we want. But that's now a contest. There's two or more - actually there's like four sides involved in addition to us. So it's a game that's being played, a grand game, and we don't control that game completely anymore. We only control it partially now. And the other issue I defer on.

MR. FREEMAN: Do you want to comment on the issue of Sunni versus ethnic identity?

MR. WHITE: I'd just say one thing on that. I think there is little prospect of a Kurdish-Sunni Arab alliance, in my mind, against the Shi'a. I think the Kurds, in my mind, have cast their fate with the United States, and they're going to hug us to the end. There are conceivable circumstances under which they would break that connection, but they're just conceivable. And I think they are going to stick with the Shi'a as long as they can. I do not see real prospects for any kind of Sunni Arab - Kurdish Sunni kind of political alignment. Maybe on a few issues and so on, but not any kind of strategic grand alliance. It's one of the major problems in Iraq is there is no grand strategic bargain amongst the players. It's all souk bargaining. There is no grand strategic viewpoint on the future of Iraq and what it should look like. It's all bargaining table stuff.

COL. NEWMAN: I think it's very difficult for the United States to have a political role of trying to build new consensus or you know, to build some sort of a confederation in the earlier question. I think there's definite limits on the roles that we are acceptable in to the Iraqis. As many of you who are very familiar with the Arab world, you know, there are some limits to the amount of legitimacy that we have. We can certainly impact the training of their security forces, but even there, as we mold them and decide what form they will take, institution building there, there's multiple efforts that are being done throughout the institutions in Iraq. But there's limits there of what we can do.

We are looking now and we need to continue to look for more options to bring in others, to get a much stronger UN involvement in the constitution process, which is ongoing, to get the EU involved in everything, which is ongoing, to get NATO involved in the military training process. And I think we will have a much better chance for success there as well as for our presence. I can't comment on the issue of troop strength, but I can comment on the issue of the presence of other government agencies

there. And we need to look at that real closely and look at the quality and quantity that we have there assisting the military effort, particularly as the security situation improves, and I think it will improve and of course, the startling aspect of the figures that are coming out for May and June is that much more of this is due to - there's another spike in casualties - not as big as it's been in previous times, but much more of it is directed against Iraqis. But we need to get the right sort of American presence there in terms of specialists to help in the institution building process. And I think that's a key aspect of the way ahead as well as the other ongoing efforts for Sunni engagement and enfranchisement. But again, the timeline for that will be dependant on a host of Iraqi decisions as well as possibly insurgent decisions also.

MR. FREEMAN: This panel may be somewhat misleading in the sense that it might give the impression that there are a significant number of Americans who have real expertise about the subjects we're talking about. But you're looking at a substantial part of the total American expertise right here at this table. And we are paying a price as a society for our neglect of Arab studies, of a study of Islam, and we are having to scramble after the fact to develop expertise that we should have been developing over time before we ever got into this. Pat?

MR. LANG: Well, first of all, I'd like to make sure everybody understands, and I think the Middle East Policy Council has done a tremendous job of publishing controversial views on these subjects that fall properly within its sphere of interest - that is, the Middle East. Now, what I was referring to earlier was something I'd like to get published on the intelligence community, which I haven't had much luck with yet.

But with regard to Iraq, I think the gentleman back there, his point is well taken in that we framed ourselves in an application of what you could either called Hobson's Choice or Morton's Fork, you know? Two interesting concepts in which you face a couple of possibilities which are both undesirable, but which you are going to have to live with one way or another. You know, are we going to stay and fight it out, try to involve NATO, bring in more forces, greater involvement, things like this, and guts it out to the end where we've got a government that can at least party rule Iraq, or are we just going to pick up and leave? You know, all of these things have really bad consequences if you adopt either one of those things. And in the end, I suspect that what it's going to come down to is that we will go along doing our best with the military, the State Department, AID, everybody else, doing our very, very best. And that at some point down the road, if it goes on too long and there are too many dead, then the American people will just run out of patience and pull the plug. I suspect that is very likely what will probably happen.

MR. FREEMAN: I used to have a T-shirt that said "Participant, Southeast Asian War Games: 1954-75; Second Place by Act of Congress."

MR. ELAND: I agree with Pat on that last comment. I think that public opinion, which is the key strategic factor - U.S. public opinion - has already flipped on the war and I think it's going to end up exactly as he says. This happened in Somalia, Vietnam, and Lebanon, and the insurgents know that. So if they don't - if they just keep doing what they're doing, eventually, the big guy is going to go away. And we are caught.

In a sense, we don't have any control because we can't withdraw and we can't escalate. I think, of course they could escalate, but I think it would be a folly as it was in Vietnam. So there are a lot of things that have been taken out of our control. I do think - and this may be my own view - I think that the U.S. government - I don't believe in a dated certain withdrawal, but I do think that before we withdraw - and I think we should withdraw fairly quickly - but I think we need to negotiate among the groups and achieve some sort of a viable - leave something viable behind or at least create a chance for that. I'm not sure anything can guarantee a peaceful and prosperous Iraq.

But I think trying to create an Iraqi identity - it's a little late for that now. And I think Pat also made the comment earlier that one of the biggest mistakes was during the war that we didn't realize that we weren't dealing with an Iraqi nation. And you can build all the institutions you want, but if the ethnic tensions or religious tensions are great - people who have studied federalism in various countries, academics, federalism, which is what we're trying to institute in Iraq one way or the other, doesn't usually work where there are ethnic minorities or religious minorities or groups - ethnic tensions or religious tensions that tend to pull it apart because those type of things are stronger than any sort of institutions that you can build. So I think it's a little late for that now and I'll go back to my other point.

The key thing right now is to make the Sunnis quit fighting and I think we're going to have to take their

concerns into account. Chas was alluding to that earlier and I think that this is going to be solved politically. And it has to be politically otherwise, it's not going to be solved.

MR. WHITE: One of the problems I think we face is that the nature of the war, the nature of our forces in Iraq changed over time. We defeated the regime with the regular army essentially - regular military, professional full-time military. But we're waging much of the counter-insurgency war with reserves and National Guard units. And the implication of that is that the casualties and the stories and so on are visited upon local communities. Little towns in Louisiana, Iowa, West Virginia, and so on, they see the casualties to units that are drawn out of those areas. That is a much more personal, local type of impact on the American citizenry and I think that's part of the process that's driving changes in attitudes. The war has come home. It's not our professional army fighting overseas like a French or European army in the past. This is National Guard and reserve units in a lot of cases that are involved in this. If you go on the web, almost every state now I think is maintaining a state casualty list for guys from the state killed in the war. And because of the way people get killed in Iraq, sometimes there's spikes in that and it gets the attention of people.

Q: Michael Dannon (sp), Americans for Informed Democracy. I was wondering if anybody could comment on the more broader question about not just the policy, but also from the strategic and tactical level about the linkage of Iraq and the global war on terrorism, how our involvement there has either helped or hindered our fight against al Qaeda and al Qaeda types?

MR. LANG: Well, it wouldn't be a great surprise for people to hear that I don't think, in the beginning, there was a lot of connection. This was just something we decided to do for various policy reasons that we had. But now, I mean, the situation has changed. Just as Jeff said that we're no longer fighting the war altogether with the regular army and Marine Corps, they're fighting it with the Guard, this makes a tremendous difference in the psychology of the war, well, the jihadists took us at our word. You want to come and fight us in this place in the heart of the Arab and Islamic world? Good, it's convenient to us. It's more convenient to us than New York City. So in fact, we will come to Iraq and we will fight you there. So these guys are pouring into the country with one thing in mind, which is to earn their place in paradise. And in fact, they're working at it very hard. So whether or not it started out that way, in fact, it has become for the jihadists the major theatre of war against us, as the great country or the kufar in the world. In fact, that's why they get to fight us. The Iraqi insurgency against us over the issues of our occupation of the country, I think is related, but not the same phenomenon at all. But I think this certainly is now a considerable part of the war on terror.

MR. FREEMAN: And a principal training ground for problems in the future.

MR. LANG: Oh yeah, there's no doubt about that. As Clausewitz said, I mean, war is the great school of war, not some school somewhere. You don't learn - the best way to learn to fight, and to fight well, is to fight a good army and survive, and that's the experience we're putting them through.

MR. FREEMAN: Sir. I think you're probably the last.

Q: Good morning, gentlemen - by a few minutes yet. My name is - I'm Cadet Lee Roberts from the United States Military Academy, TDY currently to the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. At the risk of stating the obvious, this is a tremendous privilege for me to be here. I can't think of maybe any collection of people whose views I could be hearing that could be more beneficial to me at my current stage of development.

I've repeatedly heard, both before this panel and now, that it is anywhere from highly beneficial to absolutely imperative for us to convince the insurgents, of whatever background, that they can't win the route of violent and terrorist action, and I found compelling the views of people like Colonel Lang who say that we can't do that. It seems to me that in aiming for that, we're trying to get a sort of resigned submission from a movement and movements of people who've proven themselves to be virulent and doggedly persistent in their resistance and their continued activity in the face of, for many of them, insurmountable odds, those who do meet their end.

I wonder, is there a way for us to - maybe not to the insurgents but certainly to those of the Iraqis who sympathize and perhaps cooperate - is there a way for us to credibly, from their point of view, convince them or even convey to them for their consideration that it is beneficial to them, positively beneficial to them, to transfer their cooperation and support to the Iraqi government and the coalition oversight beyond simply losing the risk of being shot by a coalition or Iraqi army? That's basically my question. Basically, is there a positive incentive as opposed to simply removal of an adverse stimulus?

Thank you very much.

MR. FREEMAN: Thank you. You've asked, of course, the key question -- which several people have alluded to -- the fact that there probably is no military solution to this situation. You've asked the essential politico-military question, which will determine how this turns out. And I'm sure everybody has a view on it.

Bob, would you like to go first?

MR. NEWMAN: I think the elections process is a step forward in that. I think witnessing, you know, the fact that the population - and of course we're talking about the insurgents as a big group where we know that there's two major divisions between the former regime elements and then the Sunni jihadis and their sub-elements of foreign fighters. But I think the election process is the main incentive.

And so the challenge, which we're working on, is to show that they have a future in Iraq - you know, in the political process. So even though they didn't vote and weren't elected, you know, and to have a place at the table, that they're going to be included and that their voices will be heard, that they have a chance for advancement in the government, the great employer, in the Iraqi security forces, the police and the military, and that they have a future there. And of course these are Iraqi decisions which have to be made, and there's a lot of challenges there in terms of avoiding - there's a tendency to not want to compromise the tendency for zero-sum gains in this part of the world. But that is ongoing.

The key thing is to understand who we're fighting and to try to chop off elements of that. If it's possible to chop off those - as you've been following in the press, the difference between terrorists and insurgents, and in terms of those who are going after Iraqi civilians being defined as terrorists, you know, in the minds of many Iraqis, particularly Sunnis, and so they risk losing what popular support that they have if they go after civilian targets. And then to get those guys to understand that there is a possibility of accommodation at a future point.

So I think we're trying to make progress in that area. I think there's been some progress, at least at recognition on the Sunni, based on the elections. It remains to be seen, as we've already discussed, whether there will be results, but hopefully there will be.

MR. FREEMAN: Ivan, Jeff and Pat.

MR. ELAND: Yes, I think that it's very difficult to convince many Sunnis to get off the fence because they see us as a foreign invader and they also know that we're going to leave. They've seen what we've done and what we did in Somalia, Lebanon, Vietnam, et cetera, and they know there is already talk of withdrawal in the U.S. So if they cooperate with the U.S. they'll be left behind when the U.S. leaves, and I think that's what they're thinking. And so, maybe there will be some participation in the political process, but I think the ultimate fear is that the U.S. is going to abandon any Sunnis that collaborate with the U.S.

MR. FREEMAN: Jeff.

MR. WHITE: Well, we've actually abandoned lots of Sunnis that have cooperated with us in terms of moving into an area, driving out the insurgents and then departing the area with some sort of police force or administration left in place - kind of defenseless against the insurgents. It's sort of a repeated pattern in Sunni areas of Iraq. So I think to some extent we actually have experienced that experience - abandoning in specific cases.

The issue of whether or not there can be a military solution in Iraq I think needs to be expanded on a little. Just like we say that there has to be a political solution, the Sunnis have to be engaged politically, there has to be a military component to that engagement, and that is suppressing the insurgency so we can allow the political process to go forward. It doesn't mean achieving an all-out victory in the field over the - you know, sweeping the area clean of insurgents, but it means creating the military conditions that allow the political things we're trying to do to go forward.

You can't establish governance in a place like Fallujah unless you hold the ground, and right now the Iraqis are incapable of holding a lot of ground in Sunni areas on their own, which means essentially that we have to do it. Again, it's a repeated pattern in Iraq.

We are offering a lot of stuff to the insurgents. The political transformation process is putting pressure on them to make decisions about which way they want to go. My guess is the Sunni population is

going to split. Some people are going to move more towards the resistance, some are going to move more towards joining the political transformation process. So it's not hopeless but it's extremely difficult.

MR. FREEMAN: Pat?

MR. LANG: Well, as you can see, this is an extremely complex and alien landscape we're talking about here, culturally, politically, linguistically - all different kinds of ways. And what has been said here is obviously true, that that's what has to be done. These things have to be brought together in the context of controlling the ground if we're going to win, right? If we're going to win - and "win" means a stable, at least somewhat effective, Iraqi government, right?

Well, this is a little bit like drawing to an inside straight, right? I mean, this is not an easy thing to do. And what it's going to require is finesse - something that we haven't shown a lot of in a lot of ways, and it takes guys like Colonel Newman and maybe you - are you taking Arabic at the academy?

Q: Yes, sir.

MR. LANG: Somehow I knew that. And what was your name?

Q: Lee Roberts.

MR. LANG: Good. Well, I had the honor to be the founder of that program, in fact, at the academy. But it's going to take guys like you, and you have to just accept this and your lot in this and go out there and play for drawing to an inside straight. That's the only thing you can do.

MR. FREEMAN: I think we must conclude. I would just note that the elections were intended to provide a basis for national consensus in Iraq on the creation of an Iraqi state and government, and they may - the process that they began has another two months or so to run.

So far, far from producing consensus, it appears the voters went to the polls to express radically different visions of Iraq. There is no agreement at all between the Kurdish vision, or visions, of the Iraq of the future, the various Shi'a visions of the Iraq of the Future, and the Sunni Arab - not to mention other minorities.

So we come down to, in the absence of a consensus about what is Iraq and what ought it to be, what is the source of legitimacy for any governing authority? Saddam's answer was, I have the bullets so don't ask stupid questions like that. We may end up providing the same answer to someone else as we leave, which is not desirable. But I think one thing is absolutely clear: yes, military action has to be a component of the answer, but foreign armies are not seen by people as legitimate, ever. And it was Talleyrand who remarked, on the basis of the French experience in Spain under Napoleon, that you can do anything with a bayonet except sit on it.

And on that happy note, I thank you all and hope that you found this as valuable and instructive as I did. And a round of applause for the panelists, please.

(APPLAUSE)

(END)